

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

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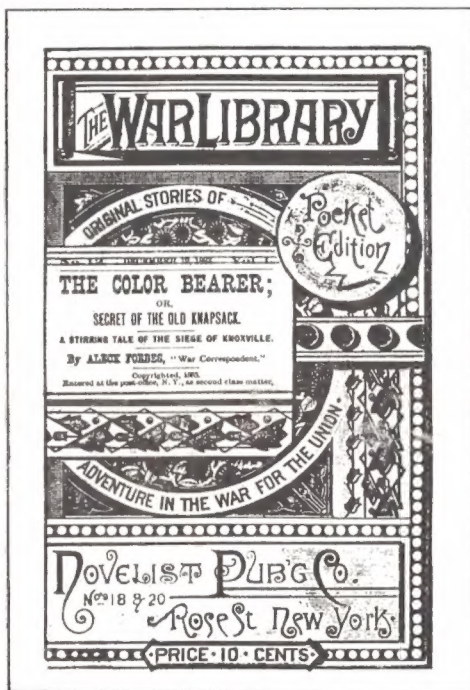
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THE EDUCATING STORY-TELLER:

Lewis Theiss and the Jimmy Donnelly Air Mail Books

By David K. Vaughan



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THE EDUCATING STORY-TELLER:  
LEWIS THEISS AND THE JIMMY DONNELLY AIR MAIL BOOKS\*

By David K. Vaughan

As any reader of American juvenile series books has recognized, there is a wide variety in the quality of writing. Some series books have been quickly dashed off under the pressure of a fast-approaching deadline, while other series books seem to have been written with the care of a master craftsman. This diversity of accomplishment is easily seen in aviation series books, for to be fully successful, these books require a reasonable grasp of technical detail and aerodynamic knowledge in addition to the standard requirements of plot, setting, characterization, and the other aspects of good fiction. It is a rare situation when one discovers both technical detail and good style in a single writer. Lewis Theiss is one of the few examples of that combination to be found in the area of aviation juvenile fiction.

But that is not to say that every one of Theiss' books is always on the mark. Occasionally his plot is weak and his aeronautical information merger. But on the whole, his achievement in the field is remarkable, an achievement that is best illustrated in his JIMMY DONNELLY AIR MAIL BOOKS, a six-book series published from 1927 to 1932. The titles in the series include PILOTING THE U. S. AIR MAIL (1927); THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST MAIL PLANE (1928); TRAILING THE AIR MAIL BANDIT (1929); THE FLYING REPORTER (1930); THE PURSUIT OF THE FLYING SMUGGLERS (1931); and WINGS OF THE COAST GUARD (1932).

As the beginning and ending dates of the series indicate, this Theiss series coincides with the heyday of American flying adventures: in 1927 Lindbergh flew the Atlantic, and in 1932 Amelia Earhart flew the Atlantic. By far the greatest number of aviation series books were written during these five years (a quick count shows that approximately 150 aviation series books—or about one-half of the total written—appeared during these years).

But Theiss was not just an opportunist taking advantage of the latest trend, cashing in on market demand for flying stories. He had been writing juvenile series books of a technical nature for over ten years before he wrote his first JIMMY DONNELLY book. Theiss' first major series involved a group of boys skilled in the art of wireless telegraphy. These boys he collectively termed the CAMP BRADY PATROL; the books associated with this group appeared from 1914 to 1919. A later series, THE YOUNG WIRELESS series, continued the activities of this early "Brady Bunch"; this series was published from 1919 to 1924.

But Theiss was always on the lookout for new areas to explore, and when flying activities began to attract public notice in the 1920s, he shifted his attention from wireless operations to aviation. His first aviation story was actually about airships, not airplanes: ALOFT IN THE SHENANDOAH II, which appeared in 1926, featured one of the Camp Brady boys, Lew Heinsling, as a main character in the story, in which the youth learns about the operations of airships in the U. S. Navy. Initially Theiss had intended to call the book ALOFT IN THE SHENANDOAH, but when that airship crashed in a thunderstorm in central Ohio, he was forced to change

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the name and the focus of the book.

When he began his new series, however, he realized that if he was to capture the attention of his youthful readers, he was going to create a character who could fly and repair an aircraft, not merely ride around in it. Thus Jimmy Donnelly was introduced. Like most of Theiss' main characters, Jimmy Donnelly was raised on a farm in central Pennsylvania, the favored locale of many of Theiss' books. Theiss' fondness for the area is not difficult to ascertain; he was himself a native of the area.

Theiss lived in the Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, area for a number of years, eventually becoming a professor of journalism at Bucknell University in the 1940s and 50s. Before devoting himself to his writing and teaching career in the 1920s and 30s, he was a reporter on Charles Dana's *New York Sun*, an occupation and a location that appears frequently in several of Theiss' books. Theiss' mid-Pennsylvania residence was a fortunate location: it was near to New York City, New York State, and the New Jersey shore. And it was almost directly in line with the route flown by the government Air Mail pilots in the 1920s, as they flew from the New Brunswick, New Jersey, area to Cleveland, Ohio, with a refuelling stop at Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, a few miles northwest of Lewisburg and a few miles north of State College.

One of the unusual and helpful features of the Lewis Theiss books is that the technical information or procedures described in them has been thoroughly researched. Theiss was apparently in the habit of talking to the people directly involved with the flying or other technical operations described in each book. Theiss precedes his narrative with a foreword in which he discusses the important aspects of these activities, describes their relevance to daily life, and lists the individuals who provided technical information. In looking at the thirty-year span of Theiss' works, which begin in 1914 and end in 1946, we can see a kind of narrative history of technical development, especially in the areas of radio communication, aviation, maritime activities, and air-sea rescue operations. No other writer of juvenile series books wrote for such an extended period of time or described such a wide range of technical disciplines.

The title of the series, the "Air Mail Series," as it is listed in the Harry Hudson/University of South Florida Bibliography, is a little misleading. Only the first three titles in the series are linked to the air mail, and really only the first volume is directly about the air mail. The second to fourth volumes are really about the newspaper business, or, to be exact, about the possible uses of the airplane in obtaining news stories (and coincidentally in solving mysteries along the way). In the fifth volume Jimmy Donnelly serves as a hired pilot for a New York businessman, and in the sixth and final volume, Donnelly joins and flies with the U. S. Coast Guard. So the series really should be called the JIMMY DONNELLY series and not the AIR MAIL series.

The first volume in the series, *PILOTING THE AIR MAIL*, is one of the best, for it provides a wealth of technical information about the operation of the air mail, including descriptions of the maintenance and repair of the fabric-covered biplanes which flew the mail in the mid-1920s, and about the visual beacon system which helped the pilots fly the mail at night. It also describes, in relatively realistic fashion, how a novice like Jimmy Donnelly could transition from Pennsylvania farm boy to air mail pilot.

The story opens as Donnelly, identified as a member of the Camp Brady Wireless Patrol, frees an air mail pilot from his disabled aircraft in the waters of the Susquehanna River near the Donnelly farm in central Pennsylvania. The pilot thanks Donnelly for his assistance and promises to

help him obtain a position with the maintenance section of the air mail operation. Donnelly then helps a repair crew dismantle the wrecked airplane and load it onto a specially-prepared railroad car. Theiss describes this procedure in good detail.

Then Donnelly is tasked to guide the surveying team which is identifying locations for a new illuminated beacon system designed to guide pilots flying at night from New Brunswick, New Jersey, to Cleveland, Ohio. Donnelly provides valuable assistance to the two-man surveying team because he knows the local mountainous terrain. Theiss gives an excellent description of the difficulties experienced by the three-person crew as it fights its way up and down the steep, rocky paths of central Pennsylvania in winter in their sturdy Cadillac vehicle.

As a reward for the good service given the survey team, Donnelly is hired as a part of the aircraft maintenance team at Hadley Field, New Brunswick, where he learns about aircraft construction and aircraft components. Working as a maintenance repairman in his spare time, he earns money to take flying lessons. As he develops his flying skills, he learns about the hazardous effects of "mountain wave" (the wind's tendency to follow the terrain of the mountain), and he successfully contends with an engine fire and a wheel that falls off his aircraft on takeoff. By the end of the book, in recognition of his faithful service and above-average flying skills, he is awarded the position of air mail pilot.

This first volume in the series is as much a handbook of air mail operations as it is the success story of Jimmy Donnelly. In no other book in the series (except possibly the final volume) is there as much technical detail. Jimmy Donnelly is described as a hard-working, goal-oriented (almost excessively so) youth who parts from his farm and family with scarcely a backward glance. But this is the standard mode for a Theiss hero, whose success stories result from the combination of industry, energy, and technical mastery.

No sooner has Jimmy Donnelly attained his most important goal—to be an air mail pilot—than Uncle Sam pulls the rug out from under him, by removing the air mail operation from government control and assigning it to the commercial air carriers. The Kelly Act, passed in 1925, initiated the process of awarding the government's air mail routes to commercial air carriers, and by September 1, 1927, the last remaining government route (the hazardous New York to Cleveland route) was awarded to an air carrier, effectively removing the government from the air mail business, a business it had been in since 1918.

In *THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST MAIL PLANE*, Jimmy Donnelly, acting on the advice of another pilot, attempts to land a job as a pilot for the New York *Morning Press*. While he is in the act of persuading the managing editor of the paper to hire him, they learn of the disappearance of an air mail pilot on a flight from Cleveland to New York. The story is further complicated by the fact that a second airplane had been reported following the air mail pilot, the missing pilot had been carrying a large number of securities, and the missing pilot is the pilot Donnelly had rescued from the Susquehanna River in the earlier story.

Donnelly is authorized to represent the newspaper and to cover the story of the missing pilot. He promptly flies to the mountains of central Pennsylvania, the area where he was raised, and begins to search. He eventually discovers that two men in the second plane had in fact attempted to rob the missing pilot during a stopover, but that an airfield manager had prevented the robbery, and the missing pilot had taken off again. However, there is evidence that the pilot might have been wounded by gunfire.

With the help of two Pennsylvania mountain trappers, Donnelly is able



to locate and capture the bandits and to locate and fly the missing pilot to a hospital. Donnelly also successfully outwits a newspaper reporter from Cleveland who had also flown in his airplane and who was attempting to prevent Donnelly from obtaining necessary information. This book contains practically no technical information pertaining to aircraft operations, a situation perhaps resulting from the changeover of the air mail operations. There is some information on how newspapers obtain their news stories, but even this information is superficially presented. Most of the focus of the story is on the physical challenges Donnelly faces in tracking his quarry through the hills and mountains of central Pennsylvania. This aspect of the story is reasonably entertaining, as Theiss obviously knew the territory well. But the story is one of the less successful in the series.

The third book, *TRAILING THE AIR MAIL BANDIT*, continues in the same vein as the preceding book. In this story, Jimmy Donnelly, now a full-time pilot for the New York *Morning Press*, attempts to solve the mystery of the crash and robbery of one of his air mail pilot friends. A New York City gambler has signed on as a passenger on an air mail flight from New Jersey to Cleveland hoping to rob the pilot of a shipment of diamonds. But the pilot is forced to crashland at night in the fog. The pilot is seriously wounded but the gangster is able to steal the diamonds and make his escape.

Jimmy Donnelly discovers that there has been a robbery and learns the identity of the gangster, eventually cooperating in the gangster's capture. Donnelly's primary challenge in this story is not outsmarting the gangster, but working around the obstinate personality of the reporter assigned to write the story and who gives Donnelly orders that hinder the investigation. Jimmy finally convinces the managing editor of his capability as a reporter as well as a pilot, and is rewarded by being appointed pilot and reporter on the case. Jimmy is delighted, but he earns the enmity of the reporter initially assigned to the case, Harold Rand, who returns in later books to complicate Donnelly's life.

This story contains little technical description of flying activities, focusing instead on the workings of the newspaper business and on Donnelly's amazingly good luck in being at the right place (between New Jersey and Cleveland) to pick up the clues that help him solve the mystery. But it is clear that Theiss believes in the value of newspaper work, as is illustrated in this extended passage early in the book:

Jimmy felt that he thoroughly understood the spirit of the press. When he was winging his way through sunshine and storm, in daylight and dark, in unflagging quest of news...he felt that he was himself an embodiment of the spirit of the press. For always that news was to enlighten the world, or expose an evil, or remedy a wrong, or bring help to the unfortunate... When he was flying to get the news, he felt like a crusader of old, like a knight errant, riding the world over to right some wrong. (18-19)

In the fourth book, *THE FLYING REPORTER*, Jimmy is a fully-authorized flying reporter, fully motivated to do his best: as the narrator says, Jimmy "put his whole soul into whatever he was doing." (27) Jimmy flies wherever his *Morning Press* managing editor sends him in search of news: to an aircraft crash in central Pennsylvania, to a hospital fire in Cleveland, to a flood in northern New Hampshire, to a lightship stationed off the New Jersey coast (to which he flies in an amphibian aircraft), to a coal mine disaster, and to an airport opening, in which he rescues a female parachute jumper from a burning aircraft while flying his own aircraft. When he is sent to cover a story about some residents stranded on

an island in Lake Ontario in the middle of winter, Jimmy is confronted with a pilot of a disabled aircraft who is involved in bootlegging activities across the US-Canadian border. The pilot forces Donnelly to fly him to the mainland, where he releases him in time to carry a doctor back to the island to assist some ill islanders.

Donnelly is then sent to Auburn, New York, to report on a prison riot. The prisoners, believing Donnelly's aircraft represents a law enforcement agency, end their riot. On a flight to carry some important papers to a government official crossing Pennsylvania by train, he is forced to bail out at night, thus becoming a member of the currently newsworthy "Caterpillar Club." Finally Donnelly is tasked to describe the story of a shipwreck in Lake Ontario, where he is assisted by the same bootlegger who had forced him to fly to safety earlier in the book, who incidentally helps him circumvent the tricks of Harold Rand, Jimmy's old nemesis, now working for a competing paper.

As can be surmised from the phenomenal number of individual adventures described, the action of the book is hectic and fragmented. The purpose of the book is clearly to show the variety of ways in which an airplane could be used to obtain news. But there is no central issue or organizing plot. Although there is some technical detail relating to the new radio beacon aid to aerial navigation, the book is episodic and disjointed. The question arises as to what else Theiss could do with the idea of a flying reporter. And the answer is, not surprisingly, not much. In the next book Theiss gives Jimmy Donnelly a new profession--aerial chauffeur.

In the fifth book, *THE PURSUIT OF THE FLYING SMUGGLERS*, Theiss invests the series with the excitement of the first volume, as the adventures of this book bring new locales and new activities. As the story begins, Jimmy Donnelly flies out to intercept an inbound ocean liner coming into New York at night. Unfortunately his amphibian aircraft strikes a submerged log which damages one of the pontoons on his aircraft. He is rescued by the crew of the ship during a difficult night rescue operation. While he is drying out after the rescue, he is approached by a well-dressed individual who asks him numerous questions about flying and about flying amphibian aircraft in particular.

The man, Worthington Chase, a wealthy New York banker, hires Jimmy to be his pilot. Donnelly is authorized to purchase a new amphibian and selects the Loening Commuter, a recently-developed aircraft designed by the pioneer aviator, Grover Loening. There is an extended description of the physical appearance and operating characteristics of the aircraft, information that Theiss apparently obtained from a pilot who flew a similar aircraft out of the Albany, New York, airport.

Jimmy decided to call the aircraft the Albatross, an unfortunate choice of names, as anyone who had read Coleridge's *RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER* would know. As it turns out, the name is appropriate, for the aircraft brings Jimmy bad luck. Chase wants Donnelly to fly him up to Canada, where Chase is interested in visiting a gold mining operation he has purchased. Chase owns an estate near Tarrytown, New York, and his mine is located north of Montreal. Thus the action of the story follows the track of the Hudson River, Lake Champlain, and the St. Lawrence River.

Donnelly is generally pleased with his new position, especially when bad weather forces him and his employer down on the Hudson River near the house of an attractive young lady named Patricia Winthrop. However, the job has its drawbacks as well, as he learns when he discovers that Chase dismissed one of his less desirable pilots when he hired Jimmy. Worse, that pilot is Wolfe Rand, brother to Harold Rand, the reporter of whom



Jimmy had run afoul in the previous two books.

It turns out that Rand has been involved in an opium smuggling operation, through a contact at the Montreal airport, using Chase's planes to bring the drug into New York City. Rand and his associates obtain their revenge on Donnelly by setting him up to be caught with a small load of opium on board when he returns from a flight to Canada. When he lands, Donnelly is surprised and then dismayed to discover that he is being arrested by a smart young Coast Guard officer, Lt. Thomas Winthrop, brother to Patricia.

Fortunately, Patricia Winthrop enlists the aid of Donnelly's many *Morning Press* friends, who unravel the mystery and place the blame where it rightfully belongs—on Wolfe Rand. The story ends as Jimmy Donnelly decides to leave his employer, who failed to support him when he was arrested, and find employment as a pilot in the U. S. Coast Guard.

The story is one of the best in the series, benefitting from a larger and more fully developed cast of characters, including the Winthrops and the various evildoers. In addition, Theiss returns to the practice he showed in the first book, of including a good deal of informative technical detail relating to aircraft operation and flying procedures. In addition to a detailed discussion of the Loening Commuter—an aircraft which had caught the popular imagination—he mentions other aircraft of the time, the Curtiss Seagull and the Travel Air monoplane. The book also benefits from a well developed and plausible plot. The romance element doesn't hurt any, especially when Patricia Winthrop reveals a strong and likeable personality.

As its title suggests, *WINGS OF THE COAST GUARD*, the last book in the series, describes Jimmy Donnelly's activities as a pilot in the U. S. Coast Guard. The energy and success of the final two volumes suggest that Theiss had known for at least two years that he was going to have Donnelly enter the Coast Guard. Theiss had some familiarity with the Coast Guard operations, having included Coast Guard activities in his series books in 1924, 1926, and 1927. As Theiss notes in his foreword, the Coast Guard had just brought aircraft into its inventory of life-saving equipment.

As the story opens, Jimmy Donnelly has just begun his duty with the Coast Guard. He is located at a Coast Guard station at the east end of Lake Ontario, waiting to learn if he has been accepted into the Coast Guard. His companion is Lt. Wentworth, the brother of Patricia. (For some reason Theiss has changed the family name from Winthrop to Wentworth. I assume this change is intentional. But I'm not so sure. At one point he refers to the paper Donnelly used to work for as the *Morning News*. Later he refers to it by its original name, the *Morning Press*.)

Donnelly learns that he has been allowed to become a pilot and an officer in the Coast Guard, permission for which had to come from Washington because no Coast Guard officer is commissioned without attending the Coast Guard Academy. A senior Coast Guard officer, Lieutenant Commander Brantley, arrives in a new Coast Guard aircraft which he flew up expressly for the purpose of intercepting a smuggling operation which they have been warned will be occurring soon.

The three officers fly out on patrol, and encounter an aircraft that looks suspiciously like it is involved in a smuggling operation. But because their aircraft is too slow, they are unable to intercept it. Just as they are about to return to their base, Donnelly hears a radio distress call, and they rescue a family from a burning yacht. Jimmy vows that some day he will build his own aircraft, which will be fast enough to outrace the aircraft used by the smugglers. Commander Brantley orders Donnelly to report to Cape May, New Jersey, for further training, and then to an air-

craft factory in Philadelphia, where he is to supervise the building of a new aircraft for the Coast Guard fleet.

Theiss' detailed description of the aircraft factory in the story is based on his visit to the Keystone Aircraft Corporation, located in Bristol, Pennsylvania, just north of Philadelphia. The Keystone Aircraft Corporation built a number of aircraft for the Coast Guard and the Navy, and in fact joined with the Loening Aircraft Company about the time of the publication of the book (1932). In spite of the merger, however, the company shortly went out of business, and the Grumman Aircraft Company inherited many of the designs and plans.

The portion of the story in which Jimmy Donnelly visits the aircraft factory contains some of the most fascinating and detailed technical description to be found in any of the Donnelly books. The aircraft factory section extends for nearly 100 pages (of the standard 300 pages of the books in the series) and covers descriptions of numerous aspects of aircraft design and construction.

There are discussions of the theory of flight, including lift, drag, and thrust; discussions of the appropriate materials of aircraft construction, including the preferred kinds of wood (pine, ash, mahogany) and metals (chrome-molybdenum and alclad); discussions of the required water content of wood, surface fabric, dope, paint; and discussions of the process by which the plane is designed, including the role of blueprints, templates, and jigs. Jimmy (and the reader) receives a complete account of how a wood-and-fabric covered plane is designed and built. Theiss was obviously interested in the entire process, for he delivers his description in an engaging and entertaining manner, framing the technical descriptions in a Platonic dialogue mode of master (the aircraft company owner and foreman) and student (Jimmy Donnelly).

Donnelly takes this information with him when he returns to his Lake Ontario station, where he succeeds in designing and building the aircraft he has envisioned for at least two books. Using his aircraft, he succeeds in intercepting the smugglers' aircraft and bringing the smuggling operation to a halt.

Having proved himself as a Coast Guard pilot and stopped the smuggling operation, Donnelly settles into his new profession, with Thomas Wentworth his good friend, and Patricia Wentworth about to become his bride. So the JIMMY DONNELLY series is effectively at an end. But the series ends on a positive and energetic note. It is not surprising that the JIMMY DONNELLY books take on a new life when they involve Coast Guard activities. The spirit of excitement that was present in the first volume, which described activities of the U. S. Air Mail, and which disappeared during the next three, returns in the last two. It seems evident that for all his newspaper background, Theiss was more motivated when he had federal agency activities to write about.

Actually, there is an interesting footnote to the JIMMY DONNELLY series, for he has a starring role in the first book of the next series to follow, the GINGER HALE series. In the first book of the series, FLYING THE U. S. MAIL TO SOUTH AMERICA, Ginger Hale makes his appearance as an apprentice mechanic and then pilot in Pan American Airways' Caribbean operations. At one point Ginger Hale and a friend, adrift in the ocean, are about to be attacked by sharks, when Jimmy Donnelly sets his Coast Guard amphibian down in a rough sea to rescue them.

In summary, then, we can see that the JIMMY DONNELLY series provides an interesting transition in the career of Lewis Theiss; prior to the first book in the series, Theiss moves from wireless activities to aerial adventure. Initially hoping for motivation through accounts of the U. S.



Air Mail, Theiss was apparently frustrated when the government left the air mail business to the commercial air carriers. After writing three less interesting stories about aerial reporters, Theiss once again became excited about his topic when he lighted upon the aviation activities of the Coast Guard. Then, as he focused his interest on the newly-developing activities of Pan American Airways in the Caribbean and South American areas, he launched the inventive and informative GINGER HALE series (1933-1939). As World War II developed, he developed yet another series closely modeled on the real flying experiences of two young Americans, in PEEWEE DEWIRE and COLVIN CRISWELL series (1941-1946). At this point, having felt that he had served his subject to the limit of his ability, he ceased to write. But that was an acceptable and understandable decision, for with the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the idea of the aircraft as adventure vehicle began to fade rapidly.

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### HOW TOM SWIFT INVENTED EVERYTHING\*

By John T. Dizer

I assume most of us agree that Tom Swift invented everything. There is no real question about it, at least in my mind. After all we have 89 books describing the inventions of Tom Swift the First and the Second and the Third or the Fourth, depending on how you interpret the genealogy. If you as members of AAAS haven't read at least one of the series your education has been sadly neglected. I might add that if you tell me which series you read as kids I can probably tell you how old you are since Tom Swift the inventor has been around since 1910, Tom, Jr., has been active since 1954 and the current inventions of Tom's descendants are now being published.

Perhaps Tom may have had some help from Glenn Curtiss, Edison or Henry Ford although there is a question in some quarters as to whether Tom learned from them or whether they copied him. Regardless of who was first to invent, Tom certainly did and his son and/or grandson still do. For an independent family enterprise whose R&D has never been subsidized by the government the Swifts have done very well. Perhaps it still speaks well for individual American science, enterprise and ingenuity.

Let's take a quick look at some of the Toms' inventions. All the Swifts have had a strong interest in aeronautics. Tom I either perfected or invented a combined airplane-dirigible, a sky racer, an air glider, an aerial warship, an air scout and a flying boat. He developed an airline express, a big dirigible, a sky train and an ocean airport. His son, with of course the more advanced technology now available invented in the aeronautics line a flying lab, a rocket ship, an ultrasonic cycloplane, and a cosmotron express. In other fields Tom I built two submarines, perfected synthetic diamonds, invented an electric rifle, a wizard camera, and a great searchlight. He designed an electric runabout, a giant cannon and an electric locomotive. He was busy. He was so busy he had little time for girl friends. Swift he was but not in romance. Young Tom was equally active in the invention line on land and sea with his atomic earth blaster, his giant robot, his electronic retroscope, spectromarine selector and the like. Tom III was more involved with science fiction as in TERROR ON THE MOONS OF JUPITER, THE CITY IN THE STARS and THE ALIEN PROBE than with pure invention but Tom IV has returned to invention including DNA, cyborg kick boxing and the invention of "a transformable ambulatory nuclear-

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\*Presented at AAAS Annual Meeting, February 10, 1992, Chicago, Illinois.

powered craft." Old Tom should be proud of Tom IV and I assume he is.

Now it is time to trace the Swift genius through what we know of their history. Tom, or perhaps I should say the Toms, have been around so long that there is a lot of understandable confusion about them. Some researchers attempt to link the family to one Jonathan Swift of some years back who made the comment, "When a true genius appears, you may know him by this sign, that the dunces are in confederacy against him." This connection has not been proven. We do, however, have new evidence tracing the family in this country back to 1862. As you may not know, Tom had several incarnations before the great Tom Swift the inventor.

To trace briefly the Swift literary genealogy, in 1862 a Dime Novel appeared with a story called *THE WRECK OF THE ALBION. A TALE OF THE SEA*. The hero of the story was Tom Swift. In this incarnation Tom was a sailor, albeit a noble and heroic one. Tom was such a popular hero that the story was reprinted in 1881 as *A FLOAT AND ASHORE; OR, THE WRECK OF THE ALBION*, and reprinted again November 30, 1889, with Tom's adventures now called, *TOM SWIFT'S CRUISE; OR, THE WRECK OF THE ALBION*.

We next find Tom in an 1894 serial in *Good News*, a Street & Smith story paper for young people. The story is "Shorthand Tom; or, The Exploits of a Young Reporter." In this incarnation Tom Swift was a shorthand writer who became a reporter. The story was written by Edward Stratemeyer who was also the editor of the magazine and 16 years later the creator (though not the writer) of Tom Swift the inventor. Stratemeyer was thoroughly familiar with the field of popular boys magazines. He probably was familiar with the Tom Swift name from the 1889 reprint, liked its ring and appropriated it. The name Ned Newton which first appeared in the title of an 1887 serial by Horatio Alger later appeared as the name of Tom the Inventor's bosom buddy.

Shorthand Tom Swift had a long and profitable history with Edward Stratemeyer. The book appeared in hard cover in 1897, was reprinted by six publishers over the next 20 years and finally appeared as a Street & Smith paperback.

So how did Tom the Inventor come to be created and who gave him life and breath? As I mentioned earlier he was created by Edward Stratemeyer but he was given form by Howard Garis and all of his inventions for probably the first 35 books were written by Garis. Both were remarkable men and myths and half-truths have grown up around them. If we are to understand Tom we need to know something about them.

Edward Stratemeyer was a native of Elizabeth, New Jersey. He had an early interest in both writing and publishing and also in science and invention. His first known story is "Harry's Trial," published in January, 1883, in *Our American Boys*. Since he was at the time also the publisher of the magazine it is quite possible that his writing career had started even earlier. As you can see he was using the Arthur M. Winfield pen name, made famous with the *ROVER BOYS*, as early as 1885 and he and his half-brother had copyrighted and published a comic opera in 1887. In 1889, "Victor Horton's Idea," a boys adventure story launched him into a career of writing and producing stories for young people. In the next few years he was incredibly prolific. He wrote and he wrote. In addition to his boys serials for *Argosy*, *Golden Days* and *Good News* he wrote, under various names, at least 65 dime novels about sports, detectives (including some of the *NICK CARTERS*), adventure and the wild west. He was editor of two magazines for boys and publisher of another. He wrote several youthful science and invention stories, including some we would now call science fiction. His first hard cover books appeared in 1894 as the *SHIP AND SHORE* and *BOUND TO SUCCEED* series and by the end of 1900 he had 47 books in



print, written under nine pen names and published by six different publishers. The OLD GLORY series, written about the Spanish American War proved very popular but the ROVER BOYS series which started in 1899 was an even bigger success. Stratemeyer continued to write almost every type of boys story imaginable and by the end of 1903 had about 80 juvenile books in print. Here are a few more examples.

The 1903 date is important because about this time Stratemeyer found he had more ideas, plots and heroes than he had time. He also felt his heroes deserved a wider audience than they were getting. He came up with a double-barrelled approach. The first barrel was the fiction factory. Although he would continue to write he would spend more time developing ideas for series, creating the characters, the plots and the general concepts of the stories and then hire professional writers to flesh out the stories. Stratemeyer would edit the stories and publish them under pen-names. The second barrel of Stratemeyer's approach was to cut his profit per book so the publishers could sell at a lower price. The result was a well bound book, well printed and attractive and selling at prices at that time of around 50¢ per book. The Stratemeyer Literary Syndicate was immediately successful and continued for about 80 years until it was sold to Simon & Schuster. Here are later series produced over the years. I want to emphasize that Stratemeyer produced these series but probably wrote only those books which carry his own name or his Winfield or Bonehill pen-names. The man who did write a great many of these books including all the TOM SWIFTS from 1910 until after Stratemeyer's death in 1930 was Howard R. Garis.

Garis was born in 1873 eleven years after Stratemeyer, in Binghamton, New York. He moved to Stracuse and grew up in central New York. When the family later moved to New Jersey his father sent Howard, against his wishes, to Stevens Institute to be a mechanical engineer. After flunking every subject except elocution and English, Howard and Stevens parted company. Howard had been writing since he was 16 and after his father died he finally landed a paying job as writer for *The Sunnyside*, a magazine for undertakers. After a varied series of jobs he became a reporter for the *Newark News*. On the side he wrote stories for *The Youth's Companion* and *Argosy* magazine including the classic science fiction, "Professor Jonkin's Cannibal Plant." His first published book, *WITH FORCE AND ARMS* (1903), was followed by *THE ISLE OF BLACK FIRE AND WHITE CRYSTALS*. The books were literary successes but did not do well financially. Then came a meeting with Stratemeyer and an agreement to write for him as a contract writer. Much of the early success of the Syndicate came from the books which Howard, as well as his wife Lilian, authored.

THE MOTOR BOYS, THE GREAT MARVEL series, THE JACK RANGER series, the YOUNG REPORTER series, the DICK HAMILTON series and some of the BOBBSEY TWINS were the early fruits of Garis's writings. Here are examples of later Garis books. Some were Syndicate books and some were not.

1910 was a great year for both Garis and Stratemeyer. Garis had permanently retired from the *Newark News* and was writing full time. In January, his UNCLE WIGGILY first appeared in the *Newark News* and shortly became immensely popular in newspapers, radio and books. UNCLE WILLILY had no connection with the Syndicate. THE MOTOR BOYS as well as the other Garis series which had been written for Stratemeyer had been a great success and in 1910 Stratemeyer decided it was time for a series about a boy inventor. TOM SWIFT was the result. Stratemeyer reincarnated Tom and Ned Newton and came up with the name Victor Appleton as the author. He added other characters, suggested plots and inventions and asked Howard Garis to do the series. Garis agreed and the series took off. Many sources say

that Stratemeyer himself wrote the first four or even all of the TOM SWIFTS. This is simply not so. Brooks Garis, Howard's grandson, recently sent me copies of releases for the first two TOM SWIFT books which are proof positive that the actual writing was done by Howard Garis. You may note Garis relinquished all claims and received \$100 for writing a book which sold possibly 15 million copies. He was later raised to \$125 per book when the TOM SWIFTS sold so well. He also received about the same for writing WHITE RIBBON BOYS OF CHESTER, a boys book on temperance, which sold zilch. Stratemeyer was the entrepreneur and took the risks and Garis did the writing. In the end they both did well financially, particularly for writers. Garis enjoyed writing, was a very fast writer and now had a steady market. He could do an entire book in three weeks while working full time at his newspaper job. His wife and later his children also wrote for Stratemeyer.

And so in 1910 TOM SWIFT the Inventor appeared. Tom lived in Shop-ton, New York State, on Lake Carlopa. His father was Barton Swift, a noted engineer who had invented the Swift safety lamp, a turbine motor and a gyroscope. He was "a very learned man," was quite well off and tutored son Tom at home apparently in the scientific method. No wasted time in college for Tom. Five books of Tom's adventures appeared in 1910; MOTOR CYCLE, MOTOR BOAT, AIRSHIP, SUBMARINE BOAT and ELECTRIC RUNABOUT. Tom was a slow starter but a quick learner. In the first book we find he "had plenty of spending money, some of which came from a small patent he had marketed himself." He had also recently invented an egg beater. He rode a bicycle with which he frightened Mary Nestor's horse requiring that he stop the runaway and save Miss Nestor. This is one way to meet your future wife. Tom bought a wrecked motorcycle from Mr. Damon, an eccentric family friend who continually blessed anything he could think of. Mr. Damon who was a brave, loyal and reasonably wealthy as well as eccentric was also clumsy and had run the machine into a tree. Tom bought the remains for \$50 and put it into good shape though at this stage of his development he had to have help from his father to figure out the gearing to use. His next project was a motorboat which he named the *Arrow*. He tinkered the engine into good enough shape that he could beat Andy Foger, local loud mouth and bully, in a race but the boat was not a real engineering masterpiece. While cruising around Lake Carlopa in the *Arrow* he rescued a balloonist and his career really took off. The balloonist and Tom built the *Red Cloud*—designed by John Sharp, the balloonist but perfected by Tom—which was a combination dirigible and airplane and a marvel for its time. So where in New York State is Shopton and where is Lake Carlopa and who was or is Tom Swift? Remember that Garis had lived in central New York and that Stratemeyer's ROVER BOYS went to school near Ithica. Remember that Hammondsport is known as the cradle of aviation and that in the early years of the century Glenn Curtiss was known as the fastest man on earth, not for flying but for motorcycle racing. Curtiss and Baldwin built dirigibles including the first dirigible built for the U. S. government. Tom Swift built an Air Glider in 1912 with which he liberated some rare platinum in Siberia. Curtis had built one in 1908. In 1909 James Gordon Bennett offered an International Aviation Trophy and \$10,000 for the fastest machine to fly over a course of 20 kilometers at Rheims, France. Curtiss built the *Golden Flyer* in less than a month and, competing against Europe's top aviators won the race at an average speed of 46 miles per hour. He also won the \$10,000 and the cup. In TOM SWIFT AND HIS SKY RACER, Tom built his *Hummingbird* in three months and won the great race at Eagle Park at a speed of 130 miles per hour, considerably faster than Curtiss. He also won \$10,000 but no cup. There are a number of other



parallels between Tom Swift and Glenn Curtiss extending for most of the life of the series. Glenn and Tom apparently had a lot in common. In later years Curtiss pioneered the "home away from home," the house trailer. TOM SWIFT with his HOUSE ON WHEELS developed the same thing in 1929 and used it for his honeymoon. In the various TOM SWIFT books Garis gives distances to Albany, Long Island, the Adirondacks and Philadelphia so by triangulation we can more or less pin down the location of Shopton to Hammondsport, New York. In addition, Hammondsport borders on Keuka Lake which sounds close enough to Carlopa to make things pretty certain, at least for me. In all honesty Shopton appears to be a bit peripatetic. In the TOM SWIFT, JR., series Shopton was still in New York State but had apparently moved closer to the coast. In the third series Shopton had been moved from the rust belt to New Mexico and in the current series Shopton is back in New York but Swift Enterprises are now in California and the Swifts have sold the old Shopton works to a double dyed villain.

Let's look some more at some of Tom's inventions. Last month AT&T announced a color video phone for customers. Tom's photo telephone came out in 1914. He was able to take a picture with it of the villain who had kidnapped Mr. Damon and the picture eventually put the villain into prison. He also invented a television detector with x-ray capabilities and talking pictures. His war tank, aerial warship and his air scout did much to give the allies military superiority in World War I and his magnetic silencer was equally effective in World War II. He circled the globe in 1927 and started coast to coast air service with his airline express in 1926. It was obviously impossible for non-stop Atlantic air service, even for Tom so he built an ocean airport for planes to rest and refuel. After 40 inventions had been chronicled Tom dropped from sight in 1941 during World War II. There is a strong belief that his work was so secret that the government wouldn't release it. We do know there were many other inventions of Tom discussed between Stratemeyer and Grosset & Dunlap over the years but never published. They included Tom's Wings of Steel (or The Human Eagle of the Clouds), his ice crusher (this was for ships in northern latitudes, not for martinis), his lumber tractor, his tidal engine, his machine gun and his electric elephants. His gold finder was a bar of metal which changed color when in the vicinity of unrefined gold. One of my favorites was his bullet-proof stand. This was a bullet-proof desk to protect speakers from attack when giving papers. It involved metal armor covering the speaker. I mentioned it to the hotel but they didn't have one.

Getting back to Tom's Love Life and obviously since there was a Tom Swift, Jr., there had to be one; you remember that Tom and his bicycle frightened Mary Nestor in book one in 1910. They had a very tepid courtship of 19 years but were finally married in 1929 as recorded in HOUSE ON WHEELS. There is a mystery of sorts here since Mary disappears for long periods in the narratives. Some recent research has come up with rather amazing possibilities. You older scientists may remember G-8 and his Battle Aces, stories of World War I air aces, very popular in the 1930s. Nippy Weston was a prominent Battle Ace. Nippy was small and slightly built and was actually a female flyer serving in the air corps in disguise though this is not generally admitted. Through some great detective work by the late John Sullivan it appears that Mary Nestor, whom Tom Swift had taught to fly, had become the famous battle ace. But why did it take Tom and Mary 32 books to get married? Was it because Mary was out of town so long posing as Nippy Weston that Tom didn't have a chance? Or was it that as slow as Tom was, at least with girls, Mary became Nippy Weston out of sheer boredom? A little war could have been a welcome improvement over

Tom's wooing. We may never know. However married they were and the results were Tom, Jr., and his sister Sandra. We know little about their early life, perhaps because of continued government censorship but we do know that by 1954 Sandy was demonstrating Swift planes for customers and Tom, Jr., was a hot shot inventor. Tom obviously takes after his dad and Sandy is apparently a chip off the old Nippy Weston block.

In this series the writer is Victor Appleton II, nephew of old Vic, ably supported by James Duncan Lawrence. I visited the Syndicate in 1963 with two of my children when Jim Lawrence was in-house editor and writer. He was working on a Tom, Jr., story and his desk was covered with engineering and scientific journals. We were all greatly impressed, my son especially, after Jim gave him a TOM SWIFT book autographed by Victor Appleton. (My daughter received a NANCY DREW autographed by Carolyn Keene!) Of the 33 Tom, Jr., adventures and inventions reported between 1954 and 1971 Jim Lawrence wrote 23. I might mention that he also wrote 15 HARDY BOYS, 7 NANCY DREWS, 4 BOBBSEY TWINS and 3 of the CHRIS COOL/TEEN AGENT series which he created. Both Garis and Lawrence took inventing seriously and did their homework. When you read any of the books the principles of the inventions tend to be fairly specific though the details may be a little vague. It is obvious that the inventions should work and if we don't quite understand how, it probably means that Tom is simply smarter than we are. Lawrence had gone to Annapolis and later graduated as an engineer from the Detroit Institute of Technology. He knew science and technology and he was (and is) a good writer and he had much greater freedom in writing about Tom than was common in some Syndicate series. Tom was popular but not as well-received as his dad and his last recorded adventure was in 1971. I suspect that Tom was too smart. We could relate to Old Tom. Anything he could do we might do also, with a little bit of luck. Few kids, however, even in the 60s and 70s could build an outpost in space or a triphibian atomicar. Jim Lawrence was a great prophet but he may have been a little too far ahead of the average invention minded kid.

I have never quite understood how Tom III got into the act. There is little science and invention though lots of space travel and science fiction. This series which started in 1981 ended after 11 titles in 1984. It is possible that this Tom is really a remote descendant or a collateral relative of the original Tom. In any case he died when Simon & Schuster bought the Stratemeyer Syndicate in 1984. I prefer to ignore him!

Anyone reading the first 73 TOM SWIFT titles would agree that the Toms invented almost everything. Just this past year Tom resurfaced, perhaps to invent whatever might be left. I have five titles and more are promised. It is a little questionable as to whether Tom is a Jr., or III, but he obviously belongs to the family. He is much more gregarious and outgoing with girl friends but he is still a good inventor. He is very much into electronics but still seems to be a fairly competent mechanical engineer. (As any competent inventor has to be!) It is too early to see if he can duplicate his ancestors' achievements or if today's boys will accept him.

It is pretty obvious that the TOM SWIFT books cover the time span when interest and probably faith in science and technology reached its height. If Tom could invent something so could we. With honesty and hard work we could harvest the reward for our inventions. We could even become rich. Tom did. And we could do it as an individual without either government backing or interference and, I might add, without the fear of leveraged buyouts. That is enough about Tom.

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## REPORT FROM LOUISVILLE

By J. Randolph Cox

It rained the first full day of the convention, but I hardly noticed. There was too much to do indoors at the Galt House and Galt House East, the two hotels were the 1992 annual meeting of the Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association was being held. For four days there was a cornucopia of delights in papers and slide shows, and other media events based on topics in detective fiction, westerns, science fiction, mythology, children's culture, photography, museums, literature and politics, ethnic studies, cajun life and culture, comic books, advertising, and philosophy, to mention only a few. Held every year during Spring break for Bowling Green State University, this time the dates were March 18-21. Why during Bowling Green's Spring break? Because they are the sponsoring university for the convention, and the convention has been put on by their Center for Popular Culture for the past 22 years.

Once again I was able to take in the entire four days and had arranged to arrive Tuesday evening where I found a cash bar and free smorgasbord waiting in the hotel to take the edge off my hunger. A brief walk around the downtown area made me aware of where some of the restaurants were located and I filed that information away for future reference. I scanned the program book before going to bed and made my choices for panels and discussion groups for the morning.

One of the main problems with this convention (as with many large conventions) is the variety from which to choose, and the difficulty of being in more than one place at the same time (i.e. attending more than one session at once). Somehow I managed to attend sessions on P. D. James' detective fiction, children's science fiction (a paper by Francis Molson about the only science fiction serial ever to appear in *St. Nicholas Magazine*), and television violence. Actually, I went to hear a paper on television reruns, but the speaker had not arrived and the chair was the only presenter. After that blitz of activity I settled for the session on detective fiction during which Jane S. Bakerman talked about the novels set in the Midwest. I tended to stay with the detective fiction sessions (where I met Gordon Huber and Al Tonik) until the coffee break in the middle of the afternoon when other people from our Area on dime novels, pulps, and series books began to show up.

I had just filled a cup with coffee and was explaining to someone how it happened that I had met mystery writer Robert Barnard while he was still teaching English literature at the University of Tromsø, in Norway, when I saw Deidre Johnson and Pat Pflieger. Somehow I managed to greet them warmly without spilling all of my coffee or losing hold on the box of Kleenex and bag of cough drops which were my constant companions at this convention. I had begun the weekend before leaving Northfield for Louisville by catching one of the worst colds I have ever experienced. Someone could have done an interesting study following me around for four days as I gradually became less of a threat to others in the contagion field.

The meeting with Didi and Pat (as the one earlier with Gordon and Al) was repeated with variations over the next few days. First Lydia Schurman and Eddie LeBlanc (along with Eddie's daughter Jacqueline) arrived and we began our first attempt to find a place to eat. Bill Gowen and Jim Keeline must have arrived that first day as well, because I remember going to the Old Spaghetti Factory up the street that evening for dinner and recall Didi, Pat, Bill, Jim, and Al in our party...well, this was indeed a kaleidoscope of a convention and soon papers, dinners, who

was who (and where), all got mixed up in the enjoyment of it all. I do like to keep track of who is on our part of the program and make mental notes of when I find each person. I found Sheldon Jaffrey walking down the hotel hallway between sessions (good...that meant the pulp part of the program was nearly complete, since I had already seen Al Tonik)...when I went to the World II Comic Books and Comic Strips section I saw Kirk Vaughan and knew that that panel was okay. Every time I stepped into a western section I was certain to find Jim Evans (whose cold was as bad, if not worse, than my own). We all have separate interests beyond dime novels, pulps, and series books that we indulge during the convention.

There were many discussions over lunch and dinner and in our own after hours sessions in our hotel rooms in the evenings. Lydia and Eddie wanted to talk about their research project (which I have dubbed the Cambridge Bibliography of Dime Novels) and explore some ideas with us and I brought people up to date on my so-called Oxford Companion to Dime Novels which is in its formative stage. Others had current projects to discuss and there may have been a few new projects hatched in Louisville.

On Friday afternoon I attended a session on Nero Wolfe and then went downstairs in the hotel to find a telephone to see if Rocco Museneche had checked in yet. To my amazement I heard a familiar voice as I passed the pay phones looking for the house phone. I had never met him, we had only corresponded, but we had had one or two telephone conversations, so I knew the voice! Rocco, his wife, and son had just arrived in the hotel as I was coming down the stairs. (I pass quickly over the trip to the University of Louisville to visit the Edgar Rice Burroughs Collection...a story for another time.)

But one by one, or two by two, the group arrived and when Saturday dawned we were ready for the session we had really come to hear: Dime Novels, Pulps, and Series Books. As it turned out, those were exactly the divisions into which the five panels had fallen...and this was the first time in nine years we had had so many sessions, or such good attendance.

There were as many approaches to scholarship as there were presenters, historical, descriptive, analytical, bibliographical, and just plain entertaining. Sometimes there was something of all of these in the same presentation. Lydia Schurman discussed the impact of the reprints of classic and romance authors on dime novel publishing and the book trade in general in her paper, "From Diamond Dick to Charles Dickens; or, How Dime Novel Publishers Reaped the Benefits of Culture." This presented the dime novel in a different historical and cultural context than we had considered before. Jim Evans fit Joseph E. Badger's four *Beadle Dime Library* novels about Silverblade, the half-white, half-Shoshone into their historical context against the story of the Ghost Dance at Wounded Knee. I concluded the dime novel session with a brief look at Weldon Cobb's Detective School series in the early issues of the *Nick Carter Weekly* and suggested the reasons for using juvenile detectives in place of the adult Nick Carter corresponded with Street & Smith's general emphasis on juvenile heroes during the late 1890s.

In our next session at 10:30, we turned the stage over to girls series books in a panel called, "Let's Hear It for the Girls!" with Deidre Johnson examining the use of the Cinderella myth in the early Stratemeyer Syndicate series books written for girls. Sherry Arconti (new to our group) discussed ways of studying plot elements in girls series books with examples from the NANCY DREW stories and the JUDY BOLTON series to explain why the latter seems more realistic. Kathleen Chamberlain concluded the session with a witty overview of the series books of Josephine Chase with an emphasis on her style.



When one discusses series books, Edward Stratemeyer's name is often prominent. Following an all too brief break for lunch, Jack Dizer, the leading authority on the subject, chaired a panel on the "Literary World of Edward Stratemeyer." This began with Pat Pflieger's biographical sketch of the man and his family and an explanation of how and where this information had been found in the United States Census Records from 1850 to 1920. She was followed by Rocco Musemeche's paper on the PUTNAM HALL series, "Pranks, A Curriculum at Putnam Hall?" which was both witty and charming in its composition and its delivery. He gave a real sense of what it must have been like to have been a boy reading these stories back when the century was young. The final presentation was Jack's own study of the early editions of the BOBBSEY TWINS book, "Who Were the Bobbseys?" in which it became clear that to the trained bibliographical eye, identifying a first edition of the BOBBSEY TWINS is not impossible.

The pulp magazine part of our Area finally had its innings in the panel "Of Flight and Pulp Writing" chaired by Kirk Vaughan. We continued to be treated to a variety of topics and approaches to popular fiction scholarship. In a talk which had its basis in articles in the *Writer's Digest* in the 1930s, Sheldon Jaffrey discussed what it was like to be a professional writer for the pulps in "Writing for the Pulps: A Job Fit for the Thirties." Al Tonik, no stranger to our gatherings, shared his investigations into the life of the prolific pulp writer, G. T. Fleming-Roberts. Kirk Vaughan dipped once more into his seemingly inexhaustible stockpile of aviation lore to examine the juvenile series by Lewis Theiss in "The Educating Story-Teller: Lewis Theiss and the Jimmy Donnelly Air Mail Books." [See pages 42-49 of this issue.]

As usual, our final session was our open forum to decide officially what we should work towards for next year. This time we had an extra speaker not on the original program, James Keeline, who shared his discoveries of how the Stratemeyer Syndicate did business, with particular emphasis on the TOM SWIFT books, in "The Mechanics of the Stratemeyer Syndicate." Since we all had copies of his paper in front of us, his actual presentation was a description (in lieu of overhead transparencies which the parent organization: ACA & PCA, do not support) of the appendices to his paper consisting of internal office memos and working lists of titles for books in the series.

During the actual forum, Eddie LeBlanc was presented with an award on behalf of the Area for Dime Novels, Pulps, and Series Books in recognition of his forty years as editor of *Dime Novel Roundup*. The award was in the form of a framed color cover reproduction from *Tip Top Weekly*. The official transfer of office as Area Chair from myself (I had taken over from Lydia Schurman after the Atlanta conference in 1986) to Kathleen Chamberlain was made and we added Didi Johnson as Area Chair Designate. Kathleen will serve for three years (with a fourth as advisor to the Area Chair Designate), after which Didi will assume the position for the next three years.

The length of the day having taken its toll, we did not spend much time on discussion, but it was decided to explore having another Dime Novel, Pulp, Series Book Symposium modelled after the very successful one at the Hess Collection in the Summer of 1991. A committee of four (Lydia, Kathleen, Didi, and myself) was appointed and I agreed to write letters to the Special Collections at both Syracuse University and the University of South Florida to investigate having the next symposium at one of those collections in 1993. The possibility of meeting together while attending the Horatio Alger Society Convention or the annual Pulpcon was also discussed. The euphoria of getting together at the annual PCA/ACA convention

needs to be kept alive with other sessions in between those dates.

Anyone interested in learning more about this group, who has ideas for future meetings, or who wishes to give a paper (or just attended) the next PCA/ACA convention (New Orleans, April 7-10, 1993) should write to

Kathleen Chamberlain  
Dept. of English  
Emory & Henry College  
Emory, VA 24327

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#### NEW PUBLICATION

GIRL SERIES BOOKS 1840-1991 Children's Literary Research Collections, 109 Walter Library, 117 Pleasant St., SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455. A new edition of the listing of girls series books. I can hardly believe the number of new series published during the 1970-1990 era. And I really believed that series books were dead. There appears to be more new series being published that were published during the first 30 years of the Stratemeyer Syndicate publications. The book is bound in cover stock with an extra plastic cover and plastic binding. 345 pages. Price: \$22.25.

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#### LETTER

Last summer at a local flea market I noticed someone had a few early Tip Tops for sale at \$2 each. I picked out some and he said I could have them all at \$1.50, but I really wasn't all that interested and offered \$1 each. He asked if I had enough to take them all and I said sure, seeing only about 15 or 20 on the table. Then he reached into a barrel alongside his table and started pulling them out by the handful. All told there were



over 100 of them and luckily I did have enough money on me to pay for them.

It wasn't until after I got home and started examining them that I realized that most were in the first 100 numbers. Over half of them were VG or fine with the others about good. Biggest problem was that they were slightly dirty but I found that by using an eraser very carefully most cleaned up quite nice. I still have quite a few to clean up as it is a very tedious job but I am well satisfied with them. I was happy to find a #1 among them. Condition on this was only about fair, but with some repairs it is quite respectable now. I never dreamed that I would get a #1 but now it is one of the prizes in my Merriwell collection. I'm not sure what I am going to do with the rest as yet but I am sure they should be worth much more than a dollar each.

I'm still reading the Merriwells over, in order, off and on and hope to eventually finish them though I still have a long ways to go as of now.

Did I ever tell you that my youngest son who is almost 30 now, is named Richard Merriwell Hoffman? His first name is the same as mine but my wife didn't want a Jr., so Merriwell became his middle name.

All for now. Continued success with your Dime Novel Roundup.

Sincerely,  
Dick Hoffman  
348 Walnut Lane  
Youngstown, NY 14174

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#### W A N T E D

First issues of dime novel series, pulps and related publications  
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#27	The Wide Awakes; or, Burke Halliday, The Pride of the Volunteers.	G., some tears at spine, slightly rolled	\$3.00
#29	The Swamp Rats; or, The Boys Who Fought for Washington.	F.	\$3.00
#42	Rory of the Hills; or, The Outlaws of Tipperary.	G., but minor discoloration at right edge.	\$3.00
#44	Across the Continent in the Air.	G., but no covers	\$1.00
#45	The Wolf Hunters of Minnesota.	G., but covers loose	\$2.00
#48	Headlight Tom, The Boy Engineer.	F., mended	\$2.00
#65	Monte Cristo, Jr.; or, The Diamonds of the Borgias.	G., but covers loose	\$2.00
#66	Robinson Crusoe, Jr.	F., spine reinforced	\$2.00
#72	The Boy Silver King; or, The Mystery of Two Lives.	G.	\$4.00
#73	The Floating School; or, Dr. Bircham's Bad Boys Academy.	G., but spine rolled	\$3.00
		G., but covers loose	\$3.00
#77	The First Glass; or, The Woes of Wine.	G., some discoloration at right edge	\$3.00
#79	The Demon of the Desert.	P., brittle	\$1.00
#83	Dick Duncan; or, The Blight of the Bowl.	G.	\$3.00
#87	Five Years in the Grassy Sea.	F., brittle	\$2.00
#90	The Golden Idol.	G., some mending	\$3.00
#91	The Red House; or, The Mystery of Dead Man's Bluff.	F., mended	\$2.00
#96	The French Wolves.	G., but no back cover	\$2.00
#98	The Young King; or, Dick Dunn in Search of His Brother.	F., cover reinforced, small stamp on cover	\$2.00
#99	Joe Jeckel, The Prince of Firemen.	P.	\$1.00
#106	In the Ice. A Story of the Arctic Regions.	G.	\$3.00
#112	Deserted; or, Thrilling Adventures in the Frozen North.	G., but some mending on cover	\$3.00
		F., spine mended	\$2.00
		F., mended, stamp on cover	\$2.00
#114	The Three Doors; or, Half a Million in Gold.	VG	\$5.00
	\$2.00	F., brittle	\$2.00
#115	The Deep Sea Treasure; or, Adventures Afloat and Ashore.	G., but spine mended	\$4.00
		VG	\$5.00
#117	The Wild Bull of Kerry; or, A Battle for Life.	VG	\$5.00
		G., spine slightly rolled	\$3.00
#129	Through an Unknown Land; or, The Boy Canoeists of the Quanza.	G.	\$4.00